

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 339

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TU, GR

SUBJ: TURKISH LEADERS RESPOND TO AVEROFF STATEMENT

1. A JANUARY 9 STATEMENT BY GREEK DEFMIN AVEROFF HAS DRAWN REPLIES FROM TURKISH PRIMIN IRMAK AND DEFMIN ILHAMI SANCAR PLUS A STRONG STATEMENT FROM REPUBLICAN PEOPLES' PARTY CHAIRMAN (AND FORMER PRIMIN) ECEVIT. (AVEROFF WAS REPORTED BY LOCAL PRESS TO HAVE STATED THAT IF TURKEY ENGAGED IN ANY ACT OF PROVOCATION IN AEGEAN, GREECE COULD "CARRY OUT OFFENSIVE ACTION IN THE AEGEAN, "WHICH IS OUR OWN SEA," AND THE RESULT WOULD BE A GREEK VICTORY.)

2. FOLLOWING ARE SUMMARIES OF TURKISH LEADERS' REMARKS:

A. PRIMIN IRMAK, AS QUOTED IN JANUARY 3 CUMHURIYET, SAID TURKEY HAD EQUAL RIGHTS TO THE AEGEAN AND IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO TAKE GREEK "THREATS" SERIOUSLY.

B. DEFMIN SANCAR IN JANUARY 10 INTERVIEW ON TURKISH RADIO AND TELEVISION (TRT) TOOK A HARDER LINE AND REMINDED THOSE WHO  
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HAVE "AGRESSIVE AMBITIONS" THAT TURKEY WAS CAPABLE OF "DISILLUSIONING

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THEM. NOTING THAT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS HAD SHOWN THAT PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES COULD NOT BE SOLVED BY UNILATERAL FAIT ACCOMPLI, HE POINTED OUT THAT THE AEGEAN WAS AN AREA OF VITAL INTEREST TO BOTH COUNTRIES AND THAT TURKEY WAS DETERMINED TO "SAFEGUARD" HER RIGHTS.

C. MOST STRIDENT AL ALL WAS RPP CHAIRMAN ECEVIT WHO USED AVEROFF STATEMENT AS TAKEOFF POINT FOR AN ATTACK ON PRESENT GOT POLICY IN AEGEAN. IN JANUARY 12 STATEMENT TO PRESS, HE ACCUSED GOT OF NEGLECTING ITS DUTY TO PROSPECT FOR OIL IN THE AEGEAN

. THE GOVT'S RESPONSE TO AVEROFF, HE SAID, SHOULD BE BACKED BY "EFFECTIVE ACTION," BECAUSE THE GREEKS INTERPRET THIS "NEGLIGENCE" OF THE GOVT AS "TIMIDITY." ECEVIT DEMANDED "IMMEDIATE FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF OUR NATIONAL RIGHTS." ECEVIT ALSO COMPLAINED THAT NORWEGIAN SEISMIC SHIP UNDER CONTRACT TO GOT WAS CONDUCTING ACTIVITIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN RATHER THAN IN THE AEGEAN.

3. COMMENT: TONE OF ECEVIT'S STATEMENT IS CONSISTENT WITH HARD LINE HE TOOK IN SPEECHES DURING RECENT CYPRUS TOUR, WHILE SUBSTANCE OF HIS REMARKS IS CONSISTENT WITH TOUGH POSITION HIS GOVT TOOK ON AEGEAN ISSUE BOTH BEFORE AND DURING CANDARLI INCIDENT LAST MAY. IT IS PROBABLE THAT EVEVIT, WITH EYE ON POSSIBILITY OF NEW ELECTIONS, IS SEEKING TO REEMPHASIZE HIS IDENTIFICATION WITH VOTERS AS CHAMPION OF TURKISH INTERESTS IN CYPRUS AND AEGEAN. ALTHOUGH AEGEAN ISSUE HAS BEEN ON BACK BURNER FOR PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, ECEVIT'S CRITICISM -- TOGETHER WITH AVEROFF'S STATEMENT-- COULD CREATE PRESSURE ON IRMAK GOVT TO SHOW MORE ACTIVE INTEREST IN AEGEAN PROBLEM.  
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